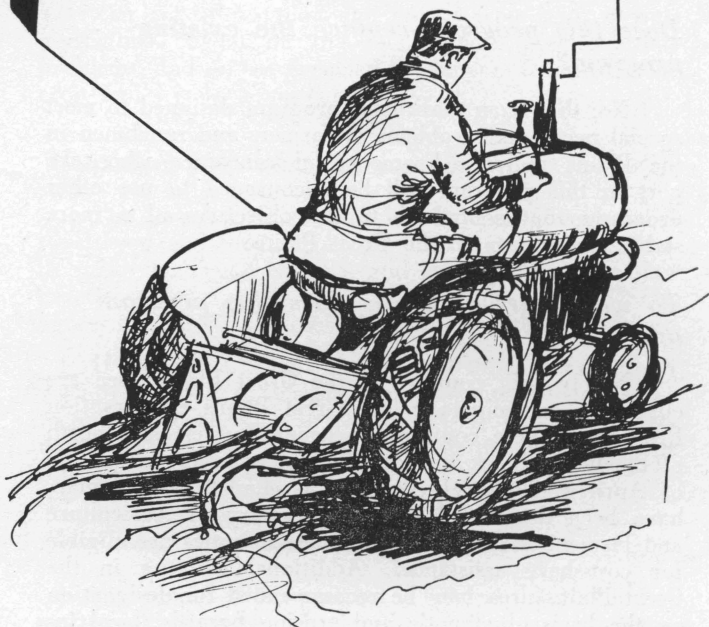


The Great Plains Conservation Program

... What is it ?



THE AGRICULTURAL AND MECHANICAL
COLLEGE OF TEXAS
TEXAS AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE
J. E. Hutchison, Director, College Station, Texas

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Lynn Pittard

EXTENSION SOIL AND WATER
CONSERVATION SPECIALIST
THE A&M COLLEGE OF TEXAS

What is the Great Plains Conservation Program?

The Great Plains Conservation Program, Public Law 1021, is intended to help speed up the objectives of the total Great Plains Program for a more stable agriculture on the Great Plains.

Does this program replace the existing program?

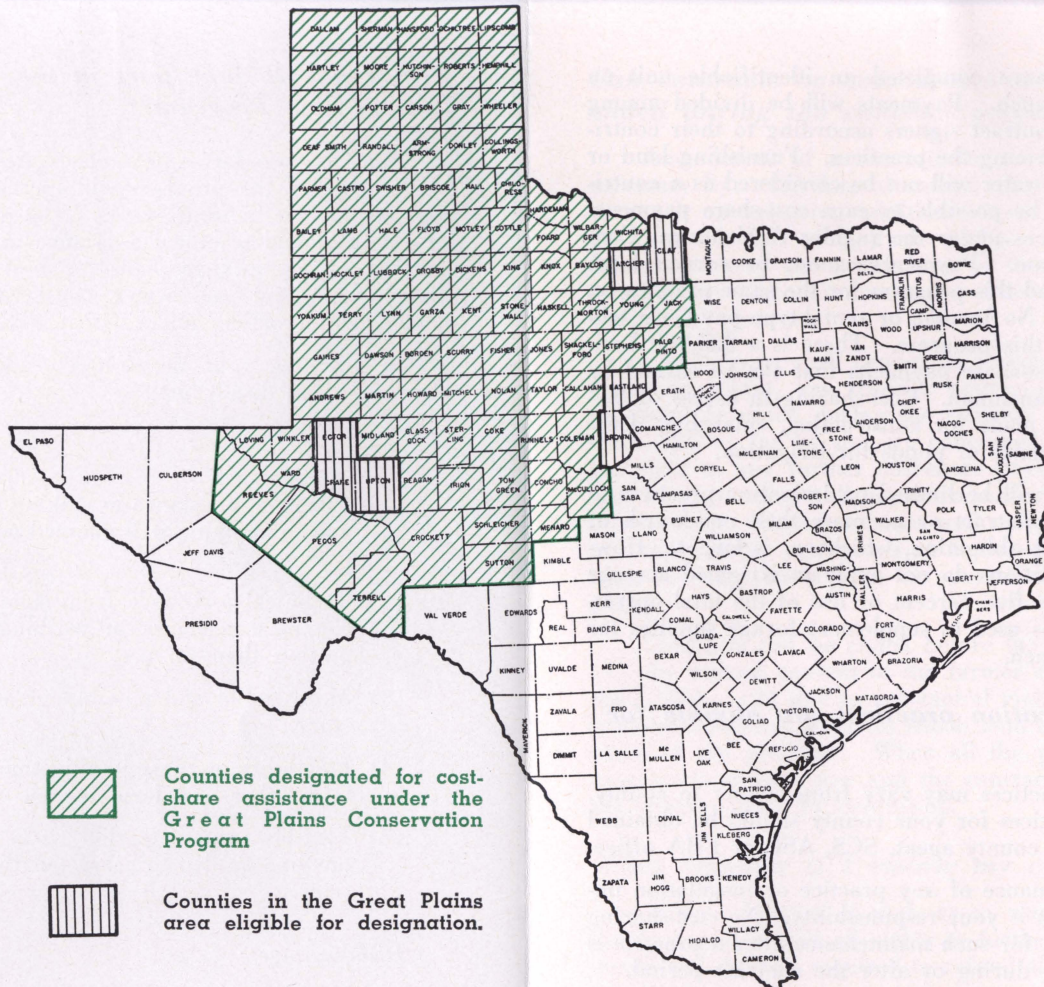
No, this is an additional program designed to meet special needs and problems of farmers and ranchmen in the Plains region. Farmers and ranchmen who take part in this program will be encouraged to use other programs that contribute to the objectives of a more stable agriculture on the Great Plains.

To what part of Texas does this program apply?

Ninety-eight counties in the Great Plains area are eligible to participate in the Great Plains Conservation Program. These counties lie generally west and north of the heavy black line on the accompanying map. As of April 1, 1962, 91 counties, as shaded on the map, have been designated by the Secretary of Agriculture and farmers and ranchmen in these counties are eligible for cost-share assistance. Additional counties in the Great Plains area may be recommended for designation on the basis of climatic and erosion hazards, local interest and leadership for the program.

Who is eligible to participate?

Any farmer or ranchman in a designated county who controls (owns or rents) land considered as an



operating unit (farm or ranch) can take part. A landowner whose tract of land is operated as part of such a unit cannot participate unless the entire farm or ranch is included.

What does a farmer or ranchman have to do to take part in this program?

STEP 1. File an application for participation. Application forms may be obtained from your county agricultural agent, FHA, ASC and SCS offices*. Completed applications will be sent to the local SCS office.

STEP 2. Develop a "plan of operation" for your farm or ranch as a basis for a cost-sharing contract. Each plan of operation must meet SCS standards for farm and ranch conservation planning.

STEP 3. Sign a cost-sharing contract with the U. S. Department of Agriculture as prepared by the local work unit conservationist and based on your plan of operation.

*Farmer's Home Administration, Agriculture Stabilization & Conservation and Soil Conservation Service offices.

STEP 4. Carry out the recommended changes in land use, cropping systems and conservation practices according to your plan of operation and cost-sharing contract. Cost-share payments depend on satisfactory performance of these provisions as rapidly as weather and individual financial resources permit.

STEP 5. Apply for cost-sharing payments at your local SCS office. After the application has been made, the work unit conservationist will visit your farm or ranch to look over the completed parts of your plan of operation. He also will check to see that no practices have been adopted which tend to defeat the purposes of the program.

What should a "plan of operation" include?

A plan of operation developed for your farm or ranch will include at least the following information:

- (1) Your name and the location of your farm or ranch.

- (2) A conservation-plan map of your farm or ranch with each field clearly marked for identification; conservation practices and changes in land use and cropping systems can be indicated on this map.
- (3) A brief statement for each conservation treatment unit in your farm or ranch, describing how the land will be used and treated. A conservation treatment unit is a field or part of your farm or ranch with common characteristics and requirements as to land use, management and conservation practices. This statement should include field identification, acreage involved, conservation practices to be applied and cropping or grazing plans.
- (4) A time schedule for each conservation treatment unit showing the amount and kinds of practices to be applied each year. These practices should be listed in order of priority for application or installation.

Where can I get help in preparing a plan of operation?

SCS will provide technical help in developing and carrying out a plan of operation on your farm or ranch. You can get information and advice from your county agricultural agent on the management practices and problems, and on the expected net income from different crop and livestock systems.

What does the "cost-sharing contract" involve?

The cost-sharing contract is a written agreement between you and the USDA. In this contract, you agree to make land use changes and to apply conservation practices according to your plan of operation. USDA agrees to share in the cost of establishing these practices.

If you are a tenant on a rented farm or ranch and wish to take part in this program, you must provide satisfactory evidence, such as a written lease or rental agreement, that you will have control over the operation unit for the contract period.

How long do these contracts run?

The period of the contract is not less than 3 and not more than 10 years. Under the present law, contracts shall be entered into starting not later than December 31, 1971, and ending not later than December 31, 1981. Within these limits, the contract period should be for the least time needed to apply and establish the conservation practices included in your plan of operation which involve cost-sharing.

Can contracts be amended, transferred or ended during the contract period?

Amendment of a contract is possible when made necessary by: (1) loss of control of part of your farm or ranch or acquiring additional land; (2) change in the time schedule of land use and practice application; failure to carry out a provision of the plan because of weather or other circumstances which do not justify ending the contract.

Contracts as such cannot be transferred. If, as an owner or tenant, you transfer your right of interest in the farm or ranch during the contract period, the contract ends as far as you are concerned. You then lose the right to any further cost-share payments. You also may have to refund all payments made previously under the contract. Payment losses and refund provisions do not apply if the new owner or tenant enters into a contract to carry out a plan of operation under this program.

Contracts can be ended before the expiration date: (1) by mutual consent of the farmer or ranchman and the USDA; (2) due to substantial violation of the contract by following practices which tend to defeat the purposes of the program. When all the provisions of the contract have been met and the contract period is over, the contract ends by expiration.

What happens if I violate my contract?

If the violation is such as to warrant ending the contract, you forfeit all rights to further cost-share payments and shall be required to refund all payments made previously.

If the violation does not justify ending the contract, you may be required to accept payment adjustments or to refund part or all of cost-share payments received under the contract.

Generally speaking, the purposes of the contract would be defeated by knowingly or negligently destroying or breaking up a conservation practice in the plan of operation unless written approval has been obtained from the SCS.

What payments can I get if I participate in this program?

Cost-share payments up to 80 percent of the established rates for applying or installing approved conservation practices according to the plan of operation will be made, after these practices are completed satisfactorily.

Payments will be made by the state SCS office when a certificate of performance has been issued by the local

SCS that you have completed an identifiable unit on your farm or ranch. Payments will be divided among the individual contract signers according to their contributions in performing the practices. Furnishing land or the right to use water will not be considered as a contribution. It will be possible to earn cost-share payments for some practices under the regular Agricultural Conservation Program. Payments cannot be earned from both the ACP and this program for the same practice on the same land. No income or rental-type payments will be made under this program. There is a \$25,000 limitation on the cost-share payments that can be earned by any farmer or ranchman. Cost-sharing in excess of \$2,500 will not be made for constructing, enlarging, deepening or lining dams or ponds for irrigation.

Funds also will be limited on irrigation practices to \$2,500 for any contract or no more than one-fourth of the total contract obligation, whichever is larger. However, these limitations do not apply to irrigated acreage which constitutes five percent or less of the total operating unit if this is used to supplement forage supplies for the farm or ranch.

What conservation practices are eligible for cost-sharing?

Eligible practices may vary from county to county. The list of practices for your county should be obtained from your local county agent, SCS, ASC or FHA office.

The maintenance of any practice or installation under this program is your responsibility. No cost-sharing will be available for such maintenance after a practice is completed either during or after the contract period.

Will participation in this program reduce my farm acreage allotments?

Acreage allotments will not be reduced during the contract period because of changes in the use of cropland required by the contract. Acreage which will be diverted from production of any commodity subject to acreage allotments or marketing quota shall be considered acreage devoted to the commodity for the purpose of establishing future state, county and farm acreage allotments.

Can land placed in conservation treatment units under this program be grazed or harvested during the contract period?

Yes, crops can be grazed or harvested from land in this program, provided such use is consistent with good management. The basic purpose of this program is larger and more stable net farm income through improved land use and conservation, not production control.

Will it pay to take part in the Great Plains Conservation Program?

Since no two farms or ranches are alike, you must decide whether the program will increase and stabilize your net income in future years. The program provides for financial and technical assistance in developing and carrying out long-range plans for best land use, cropping system, soil and water conservation and other management practices under Great Plains conditions.

In reaching your decision, consider the following advantages and disadvantages.

Advantages:

- (1) Financial assistance in making land use changes and in applying well planned conservation practices.
- (2) Technical assistance from state and federal agricultural agencies in working out plans and putting them in use.
- (3) More stable and possibly greater net farm income.
- (4) Flexibility to permit adjustment to variations in weather and farm income conditions.
- (5) Flexible contract period (3 to 10 years) based on time needed to carry out the plan of operation.

Disadvantages:

- (1) Entire farm or ranch operating unit must be included in the plan of operation.
- (2) Possible refund of payments if practices are followed which tend to defeat contract purposes.
- (3) Uncertainty of length of tenure on rented farms and ranches with problems of landlord-tenant relationships if owner or tenant should change during contract period.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit your local FHA, SCS, ASC or county agricultural agent's office.